

Washington, DC – Today, the Democratic Caucus of the House of Representatives introduced new health care reform legislation, combining the efforts of the House Committees on Energy & Commerce, Ways & Means, and Education and Labor, as well as legislation considered in the Senate and other House committees. The combined bill, the [Affordable Health Care for America Act \(HR 3962\)](#), will be considered on the floor of the House in the coming weeks. Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX-20) issued the following statement on the vote.

“After testimony from over a hundred witnesses at multiple congressional hearings, lengthy debate by three different committees, and thousands of town hall meetings and conferences held throughout our nation by Members of Congress, a health care reform bill has been introduced for House consideration. This historic bill would make stable and secure health care available to every American at a reasonable price, reduce the health care costs of millions of small business owners and individual Americans, ensure the stability of Medicare, provide the preventative care that will keep our children healthier, and reduce the federal deficit over the next ten years. The American people are now closer to getting the affordable and quality health care they need and deserve.”

The three Committees each marked up America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 (HR 3200) in the spring and early summer of the year. In the month's since, Members of Congress have consulted with their constituents and each other, and HR 3962 incorporates a series of improvements arising from those discussions.

Among the major provisions in the bill are:

- Prohibiting denial of coverage [based on pre-existing conditions](#), particularly the counting of [domestic violence or infertility as pre-existing conditions](#), rescission of coverage when a person actually gets sick, setting higher premiums [because of gender](#), and the imposition of lifetime caps on coverage;
- Closing the [Medicare Part D donut hole](#), with an immediate \$500 cut and 50% discount on brand-name drugs, and shrinks it every year until it disappears in 2019, and ending deductibles and co-payments for preventative service under Medicare;
- Imposing [specific limits](#) on how much an insured family has to spend on health care, so a

family living at 200% of the poverty line won't spend more than 5.5% of their income on premiums or \$2,000 in annual, out-of-pocket costs;

- Creating a [health insurance exchange](#) , where individuals or small businesses can purchase private insurance, with 86% of small businesses – those with payrolls under \$750,000/year – paying little or nothing to participate;

- Creating a [public health insurance option](#) , for which rates would be negotiated with health care providers across the country, that 11-12 million Americans are expected to choose as their insurance provider, and supporting the establishment of health insurance co-ops to increase competition;

- Allowing children to remain on their parents' insurance until their 27<sup>th</sup> birthdays and extends COBRA eligibility until the exchange goes into effect, so Americans don't lose insurance just because they lost their jobs;

- Supporting programs to help more Americans, including minorities, to begin careers as [doctors, dentists, nurses, and other public health professionals](#)

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The full text of HR 3962, as well as numerous summaries and analyses, may be found [here](#) .

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